



CIDA photo: Peter Bennett

# Canada and the United Nations

**T**he United Nations is the only multilateral organization whose membership approaches universality and whose agenda encompasses all areas of human activity, in every region of the world. That is why it is so important to Canada.

It is also the forum in which grievances are aired and, with member state consensus, resolved. The UN's ability to live up to its founders' ideals, and to its potential, is almost exclusively determined by the 188 countries that collectively constitute the United Nations. Our successes are its successes; our failures, its failures. This organization can only accomplish what its member states allow it to.

Individual Canadians have taken major roles within the UN, and many of its great accomplishments have had a Canadian dimension. For example, John Peters Humphrey was the principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed on December 10, 1948; Lester B. Pearson developed the concept of peacekeeping during the 1956 Suez Crisis; and Maurice Strong chaired both the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm, and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in

Rio de Janeiro, serving as well as founding Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Canadians have occupied key positions within the United Nations system, including the presidency of the General Assembly (Lester B. Pearson, 1952-53); and in January 1998 a Canadian, Louise Fréchette, was appointed the first-ever UN Deputy Secretary-General.

The UN's basic purposes and its other underlying principles have guided Canadian foreign and defence policy from the outset. Over the past half-century, Canada has made a significant, constructive and sustained contribution in all areas of UN activity: peace and security, development assistance, human rights, and social, economic and environmental affairs.

As the cornerstone of a rules-based international system, the UN is a vital forum through which we have sought to influence world affairs, to defend our security and sovereignty within a stable global framework, to promote our trade and economic interests, and to protect and project Canadian values such as fairness, equal opportunity and respect for human rights.